DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 105 564 EA 006 973

AUTHOR Love, George H.
TITLE Problems of School Administrators in the Education of Minority Children.
PUB DATE 23 Feb 75
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at American Association of School Administrators Annual Convention (107th, Dallas, Texas, February 21-24, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; Curriculum Planning; Educational Administration; *Educational Equality; Educational Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Individualized Instruction; Lower Class Students; *Minority Group Children; Minority Groups; Student Motivation; *Student Needs

ABSTRACT

Educators must be realistic about the children in their charge and implement programs to meet students' individual needs without destroying their self-concepts. It is a recognized fact that disadvantaged children need special help and attention beyond that required by the motivated student. We must never lose sight of the fact that these are individual children who are living in a particular environment, and that each child has his or her special needs. In some urban school systems, students are still being tracked; blacks and other minority group individuals are placed in special education classes and detention centers to a greater extent than nonminority students. The result is lower self-esteem and its concomitants for minority students. We need to get back to our philosophy of educating individual students and not be so concerned about classifying students as fast or slow learners. In doing so, we will provide optimum educational benefits for each of the children in our school systems. (Author/JG)

ED105564

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
107th Annual Convention
Dallas, Texas February 21-24, 1975

SPEAKER: George H. Love, Assistant Commissioner for Basic Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Harrisburg, Pa.

TOPIC: Problems of School Administrators in the Education of Minority Children

PLACE: Room N-231, Convention Center

TIME: 2:30 p.m., Sunday, February 23

PROGRAM: Page 85

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"Problems of School Administrators in the Education of Minority Children"

In this presentation, the term "minority" will refer to blacks, Spanish-speaking people, including Puerto Ricans and Chicanos, and American Indians; it will pertain primarily to the poor and unmotivated students in these groups in both urban and rural settings. Motivation will mean the ability of a student to learn without continuous direction and supervision, and where the student is disciplined to concentrate and to learn self-selected ideas, data and values. The unmotivated student, therefore, would be like the Cheshire cat in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, where Alice says, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" And the Cheshire cat replies, "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." This is only one of the aspects of most of the minority group children.

Dr. Kenneth George, Professor of Science Education at the University of Pennsylvania, in a recent article dated January 4, 1975, in the Reading Eagle stated the following:

> "Unfortunately, because they express themselves'differently', too many teachers claim the urban child lacks the 'native ability' to learn. Their use of non-standard English may, indeed, be a major reason why these children have problems, but it would be in error for urban teachers to ascribe academic failures to cognitive deficits rather than language differences. Since most urban teachers can't understand the language used by children in their classrooms, it has been widely suggested that standard English be taught as a second language. For this to succeed, teachers must know which grammar rules will cause difficulty and which will be easily acquired. Taking children from where they are, providing concrete objects and materials for manipulation, exposing them to new and different experiences, including small and large group discussions, using standard English, will help foster and develop oral communication skills. Also, an attitude of tolerance and acceptance toward language differences by the classroom teacher, will enhance a youngster's self-concept and personal worth, two valuable motivational factors. Educators have talked about individual differences for years, however, most curriculum guides for elementary schools are the same. Urban and suburban children study the same topics, even though we know they come from different homes and backgrounds. All children are capable of learning; however, if the lack of certain language and inquiry skills of entering first grade children hinders their learning capacity, perhaps the curriculum guides and urban teachers should emphasize them more, so all children will reach full potential and be successful students."

EA 006 973

The important message to be conveyed is that educators must be realistic about the children in their charge. They must implement programs designed to meet the student's individual needs without destroying the student's self-concept.

To more adequately describe the background from which some of these children come, I would like to read an article written by Bob Talbert in the Detroit Free Press on January 19, 1969. It is entitled "The Voices of Poor Street."

"Every town has one, from metropolis to country crossroads.
Poor street.
It is pot-holed and pot-sold, and it dead-ends.
It has no beginning, no end, and a lot of middle.
It has sores and ringworm and right fists shoved into tight pants, waiting and scheming and conning.
A Poor Street doesn't laugh much. It seldom stops crying.
In lung-ripped shrieks or sound-less as a breaking heart.
It leans on the store fronts, or it breaks it in-- a thin line--often crossed.

Poor Street is lined with a straight face. Acting stupid.
Playing dumb. Exploiting someone's compassion.
It's shucking and jiving and cooling and hanging out and cussin' and fightin' and lyin' and lovin' and Lord knows why it is.
Poor Street is always running out-- out of soap and money and food and time and staying together.
It knows that barely getting by is your best shot, the best you can ever do.
Poor Street is ugly. It is always half living-- never a full measure, never a heaping spoonful. It is fear and grief and never belonging to anything or anybody.
It is no place to live, but they do.
For some, Poor Street is the only place they got.
They turn the other cheek and get knocked down.

And they have this feeling today--this terrible belief and frightening feeling--that no one is listening, no one is understanding.
There are new leaders in the country today. Are they listening, and will they understand?
"When these kids reach sixteen, I hope they'll walk right out of this house, and never look back."
"That old man died months ago and on his welfare check day you oughta see his friends waiting on the mailman."
"I asked the officer what charge was they locking me up on and he said,'We'll find something.'
"I don't know but three places to go--Heaven, hell and here--and I've been to two of them."
"When you get old you don't want much--just to keep the dirt down so your friends can come see you."
"The older you get, the more you don't think right, and so you quit trying."
"Let's get drunk and be somebody."
"We want the right that we ought not to be beat on the head all the time."
"When things go wrong over and over, a person gets in the habit of them going wrong and it gets hard to expect them to be different."
"Every time the door knocks, you look and see a stranger even if he is your own flesh and blood."
"That cat's got the butcher knife and a pint of wine, and he is combat-ready."

"I got just one wish. I wish I wasn't born."
"How you gonna tell a child things will be better when he's always asking for bread and you have to tell him there ain't none?"
"You have to choose between having children warm or having them fed--one or else the other."
"This is the fightingest street I ever lived on."
"It gets a little easier in the summer when you don't need the heat but I ain't seen musch summer--it seems like winter all the time."
"I never have to go to school regular--one or two times a week and you still pass and that's the funny part."

Herbert L. Foster, writing in the November, 1968, issue of the Phi Delta Kappan said, "In America, the pathology of the Negro urban slum has developed over long years, through many ecological patterns. The slum subculture provides disadvantaged children with a frame of reference that is different from the middle class or dominant culture. Briefly, the disadvantaged child's lower class life is violent, hostile, aggressive, anxious and unstable. Often he turns his aggression on himself, his peers and authority figures. He learns to fight for everything. Might makes right, and his discipline tends to be physical, custodial, with threats and punishment rather than psychological resolutions."

I have walked through many of the poor sections of major cities in the United States. I have seen broken windows, vandalized homes, graffiti on buildings, drunks lying in the streets. I have seen exchanges of narcotics, and I have smelled the odor of marijuana. I have seen fights, police brutality, and I have known people who were murdered. I have also taught in schools where the children came without having breakfast, where graffiti was scribbled on desks, seats and walls, where gangs were rampant and fighting ensued, where teachers were threatened and sometimes beaten by students, and where fire alarms and fires were the usual event rather than the unusual.

It is a recognized fact that these children need special help and attention over and above that required by the motivated student. Some criticism has been leveled against forces in society that have not assisted schools in alleviating some of the conditions. However, if we realistically examine the background from which these students come, we will see that the schools failed their parents, many of whom do not have the ability to assist their children in developing intrinsic motivation or even an extrinsic motivational atmosphere within the home. Fortunately, there are some parents who can provide the kinds of atmosphere that are conducive to learning, and some ghetto children are able to rise above their limited family backgrounds and eventually achieve success in our adult world. Children from poor environments do need special help in seeing, hearing, talking, reading, learning, adjusting, and growing up. However, according to Maslow, the physiological needs are more powerful, than, and must be fulfilled, before ego needs. The implication is that if we can provide children with the proper nutrition, water, elimination, we can then move in the area of providing a sense of security and recognition for them. We must never lose sight of the fact that these are individual children who are living in a particular environment and each has his or her special needs.

Let us see what happens when these children start school. Studies have shown that the high pupil/teacher ratios, low rates of per pupil expenditures in the public schools, and low rates of age eligible children enrolled in public schools are associated with high rates of failures. In schools where there is a high percentage of black children, there is usually a high rate of absenteeism on the part of teachers, as well as on the part of students. Schools that become predominantly black usually become all black in a relatively short period of time, because there is a tendency for the more financially able parents to either place their children in private schools, or to arrange to send them to some other school within the school system, or to move to a different neighborhood. The poorer

the reputation of the school, the greater the tendency of the advantaged persons to avoid it. The children who have to attend such a school know that they are attending a bad school, and their behavior often illustrates this. The teachers also are aware of the situation and transfer as quickly as possible.

There was an article in the January 20, 1975, edition of Education Daily which described the attempts of the Los Angeles School District to cope with problems in the schools. The district has hired 253 full-time security guards and assistants, and fathers working in the evenings as security aides. Despite such measures, there has been an increase in crime in the schools with attacks on teachers and other personnel up 30 percent over 1973. There is also an increase in gang activity. The situation in Los Angeles is not unique, and it reveals what administrators are trying to do to solve problems of crime and violence in schools. The effect on the minority group child is obvious. Schools become oppressive places--similar to jails. School doors are locked and guarded. Students are given I.D. cards or hall passes to go to different areas. They are made to feel that they are in hostile territory and are not to be trusted. They want to escape as soon as possible, even if it means "cutting classes", "playing hooky," or "quitting school." It has been suggested that school crime and truancy are related because children can develop destructive ideas when they are not in school. I believe that they can also develop some destructive ideas when they are in school.

When students are caught after committing a crime or disobeying school rules, the administration may resort ot suspension. Sometimes this is what the student wants because it permits him to legitimately escape from school. It is interesting to note that on January 23, 1975, the U.S. Supreme Court rendered a 5-4 decision in which the Justices held that students have certain constitutional rights to know and answer charges brought against them before they can be handed suspensions from school. The ruling requires discussion of the charges on short term suspensions and formal hearings on longer term suspensions. It never seemed sensible to me to have some minority group children suspended from schools for cutting classes or truancy. However, this has not been the practice of school administrators for many years.

There has been a movement in recent years to desegregate urban schools by means of busing. There have also been attempts to integrate urban children with teh more advantaged children in suburban areas. Some statistics are available that reveal that a mixture of bright with slow youngsters, the economically advantaged with the economically disadvantaged children, raises the levels of all of the children within a given classroom. Busing has met with much opposition, some of which is justified, because within a given city, merely mixing children together without any attempts at integration does not necessarily provide a quality education. Theoretica lly, we have eliminated the dual school system. However, we have not really achieved a unitary school system which is necessary if we are to treat all students alike and develop educational programs that will develop the talents, interest, and aspirations of each student. Busing is not really an issue. What is an issue is, How do we eliminate the racist attitudes that exist on the part of some of the members of the community which result in residential stratification, as exhibited in the white suburban areas ringing an increasingly black urban area, in the provision of equal educational opportunities?

In order to assist school districts with desegregation, the Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which established three related mechanisms for accelerating the school desegregation process. Title IV provides for law suits by the Department of Justice to require desegregation. If school systems are willing to deprive themselves of the benefits of federal funds for the sake of maintaining segregation, law suits by the Attorney General will require them to desegregate and render their acts of defiance an exercise in futility. Title IV prohibits discrimination in the distribution of benefits from any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance, utilizes the leverage of federal education funds as a means of bringing about desegregation. Failure to comply

with non-discrimination requirements of Title IV may result in termination of federal education assistance, following elaborate administrative enforcement procedures. Title IV also established an approach which is that of federal financial assistance to school districts to help them overcoem problems incident to desegregation. Under this title, grants may be made to local school boards for teacher training or for hiring technical specialists. They may also be made to state departments of education for programs of technical assistance. In addition, provision is made for grants or contracts with institutions of higher education for training programs and other technical aid to local districts.

To state it very bluntly, equality of educational opportunity for all children and youth irrespective of race, has not been achieved. Busing seems to have become an end in itself, although the mixing of the races in schools might be a first step in the development of that quality education program. The situation existing in Boston, which is depressing because of the harsh confrontations, the violence and the hardened positions that have been taken by discordant groups, reveals the attitudes of a segment of our community which obviously does not believe in the concept of equal rights and equal opportunities. What is the effect of the confronations of the minority group child? I can imagine that it results in a lower self-concept, a decrease in self-worth, fear leading to aggression, and a decrease in ability to learn because of emotional stress.

In a recent proposal put forward by the Education Commission of the States, in an unpublished memorandum dated May 24, 1974, it was stated that an amendment to the United States Constitution be passed that states that education is a fundamental right of children and that the right of equality of educational opportunity in public schools shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, sex, religion, economic condition or place of birth or residence. This proposal, if adopted, would provide fully equal educational opportunities throughout the nation.

If we examine what is actually being done in some of the urban school systems, we will see that students are still being tracked. The preponderance of enrollment in special education classes consists of blacks and other minority group individuals and minorities are also placed in detention centers to a greater extent than the non-minority school students. It is interesting to note that Californai has temporarily discontinued the use of I.Q. tests to identify students for referral to special classes for the educable mentally retarded as a result of a class action lawsuit which charged that the tests are racially discriminatory. There was a State Board Resolution which said, "The state shall not approve any individual intellignece test which does not properly account for the cultural background and experience of black children."

My last secondary school teaching experience was in an all-academic high school where the minimum I.Q. was approximately 115 for entrance into the school. But even within this range, students were placed on three separate tracks. One was called the star group for for the exceptionally bright children, the other was the advanced placement group, and the third was the regular track. Needless to say, the greatest percentage of minority youngsters was in the bottom track. What is the effect of this type of segregation within the desegregated and integrated school on the minority group child? The result, again, is lower self-esteem and its concomitants.

One of my responsibilities as Assistant Commissioner for Basic Education for the Pennsylvania Department of Education was to work with the superintendents of the large urban school districts in Pennsylvania to assist them with any problems they might have. This was really a formidable assignment, however, we were able to accomplish some very positive things within those school districts. But I remember one situation where the principals of several schools had placed some minority youngsters in a detention center for reasons which were rather obscure. Some of the students had talked back to the teachers, or had consistently failed to bring in their homework assignement, or had failed to turn in a book,

or were "trouble makers," and these were the grounds for the students being excluded from school and placed in a detention center. The parents of some of the minority youngsters brought a suit against the school district to close down the center in order to prevent the assignment of children to the center. The curriculum offered was not as good as that in the sending school.

What can school administrators do in the situation where the minority group children are disruptive? They can make certain that the teacher has the proper attitude and is not the causal factor in unusual student behavior before placing students in correctional classrooms or centers. They must realize that the children are victims of their environment, where emulation of the Superfly image takes precedence over that of Little Lord Fauntleroy. There have been lawsuits levied against the individual school districts, as well as the Department of Education, concerning either failure to enforce regulations of our State Board of Education or failure to follow the federal guidelines for Title I and special education programs.

We do need to get back to our philosophy of providing an education for each individual student and not be so concerned about categorizing or classifying students according to whether or not they are fast or slow learners or special education or vocational education or academic-oriented students. We need to get specific information about the learning styles of individuals and provide the kind of motivational atmosphere within the school building to enable the individual student to be successful. We need to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each student and build upon the strengths and eliminate the weaknesses. If this requires alternative learning programs for individual students, then these certainly ought to be provided within that particular school building. Because the minority students usually have poorer self-images, a greater sense of powerlessness, a more fatalistic attitude towards life, a lack of future orientation, and a greater potential for anti-social behavior and impulsive acting out, the school administrators need to make certain that teachers within their school buildings or school district receive the proper training to cope with these students. In reality, teachers become primarily disciplinarians and become frustrated when they encounter student apathy and disinterest, as well as outside influence from parents and community, which would prevent the teachers from exercising disciplinary procedures. The teachers need to be given a sense of security, and in that way perhaps they would be more trusting of students to act in their own need and best interest. One method of achieving this kind of relationship between teacher and pupils is for the school administrator to adopt a similar attitude and assumption about teachers.

School policies are being developed by state boards of education, by courts, and by local school boards. The school administrators are expected to carry put those policies that are being handed down to them. The task is not an easy one, and school administrators must impress upon those persons under their charge the necessity for implementing those policies and support them in carrying them out. In so doing, we will provide the optimum educational benefits for each of the children in our school systems, and instead of graduating students with a low level of achievement who are anti-intellectual and primitive and concrete in conceptual ability as well as non-verbal, we will be graduating students who will have developed some competency in academic pursuits as well as in skill development. We may also reduce the number of students who leave school prematurely.

An article on the November, 1971, edition of The School Administrator concluded:

> "We arenow faced with the problem of modifying school programs after the fact of desegregation, without benefit of prior planning in almost all instances other than such immediate planning as was necessary for actual physical transition to unitary school systems. The gigantic educational problems inherent in extending and equalizing educational opportunity and improving the quality of programs available to all challenge the best efforts of school districts in the region and nation if American goals of

equal opportunity are to be well served."

I hope that my address has provided some insight that will be helpful in providing for the needs of minority group children so that they may effectively enter the mainstream of our American democracy.